

From Hetfelle to Hatfield - over 1000 years of history

HATFIELD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 120 March 2021

HATFIELD's BREWING PAST REVISITED

By Jon Brindle

In 2014, HLHS members may recall it was the year commemorating the centenary of the commencement of the First World War in 1914. At the time Pryor Reid's Hatfield Brewery was still operating as it had since arriving in 1837 to the site in the Old Town where brewing had taken place in the centuries before. During its tenure, Pryor Reid became a major local employer, having over a hundred pubs to supply during the early 1900s.

The owner's son would have taken over the business but died at the Somme in 1915.

As a consequence, the brewery closed in 1920 and its pubs were sold at auction.

But in early 2014, I wondered if it would be possible to recreate some of those old beers to raise funds for the British Legion. To cut a very long story short, some recipes were found, the beers were brewed and they were sold locally.

This heritage project gained a lot of media attention too.

Scroll on to 2020 and whilst again referring to the WEA book *Pubs and Publicans* - which chronicled much of Hatfield's brewing past - a recurring thought struck me when it mentioned the Hopfields pub (opened 1937) being built adjacent to a Birchwood Farm field "...appropriately called Hopgrounds".

Presumably, this meant where hops were once grown. But when, where and was it true?

I could not find any other reference to hop growing and had previously drawn a blank with pub owners McMullens. Perhaps the 'hop' part of Hopgrounds had another place name meaning?

But the 'eureka' moment eventually came when reading MBE Patrick Grattan's book titled 'Oast and Hop Kiln History'.

In it he states, "*Hops had been used in brewing in northern Europe for centuries but hardly at all in England up until the 16th century*".

At this point, he explained the difference between ale and beer: "*..ale was made with malt but without hop flavouring – the forerunner of what we would call lager; the brew flavoured with hops was called beer, what we would now call bitter.*" We know of the great

Cont.....



Hop vines at Stocks Farm in Worcestershire

Contact the Editors:

c/o Mill Green Museum, Hatfield, AL9 5PD

Email: contact@hatfieldhistory.uk

Chairman: **Phil Marris**



hop growing areas of Kent, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, but Patrick gives Hatfield, Herts a late 1500s mention too!

But more local detail was required.

Relatively few hops are required to flavour beer and as they tend to be grown vertically, an estimated acre (half a football pitch) could yield enough to keep a dozen pubs in beer.

As this seemed a fairly small area to cultivate, I thought it plausible that brewers back then may well have grown their own hops.

The best candidates for this idea were the Flemish Searancke family, a branch of whom moved from Essendon and acquired the Chequers Inn at the bottom of Fore Street, brewing hopped beer from their brewhouse at the back of the property during the early 1600s.

Hatfield House archivist Robin Harcourt Williams kindly provided the clarification:

“Several hop grounds in Hatfield are mentioned in 17th century records. This doesn’t mean that they didn’t exist in the 16th century but probably reflects the fact that more plentiful documentation survives from the period after the Cecils came here in 1607.

A hop garden at the Parsonage (Howe Dell) features in a number of references. The Parsonage and glebe lands were on lease to the Earls of Salisbury for most of the 17th century. A typical entry in the Agent’s accounts records a payment for “dressing the hop garden at the Parsonage” in 1625 (Archive reference FP5/223). In 1638 “the hop ground in the parsonage pightle” measured 1 acre and 12 perches (HMP 1617). In 1670 the Parsonage lands were leased by the Earl to Thomas Searancke of Bishop’s Hatfield, brewer; they included the hop ground (5 roods) belonging to the Parsonage (HMP 1775).

There was a brewhouse at the Parsonage by 1607 (HMP 1093) which I think became the principal source of beer for supplying Hatfield House.

There was also a hop yard near Ford Mill (Mill Green), mentioned in a deed of 1609 (HMP 1243). And Edward Rolfe was ordered several times by Hatfield manor court in the 1630s to scour his hop ground ditch (HMP 1597, 1603 and 1611).

The “Hop Ground” at Birchwood Farm is shown on an estate map of 1824. By then it had become an arable field of 27 acres”.

So, with thanks to Robin, we have conclusive proof that hops were indeed grown in Hatfield over 400 years ago - and that brewer Thomas Searancke leased a hop ground in 1670.

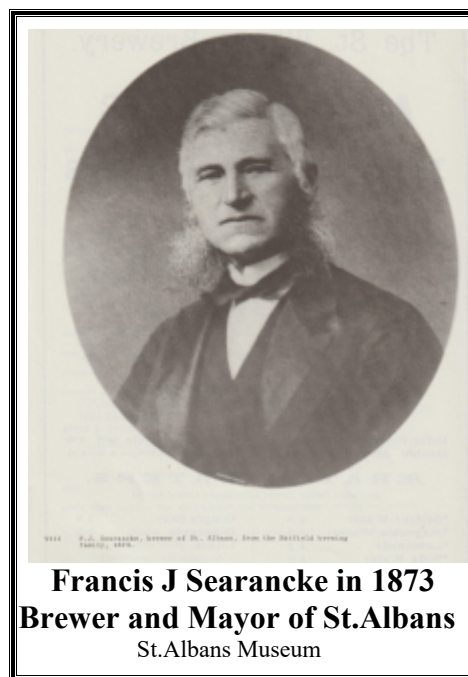
Due to this information, Patrick Grattan is to append his book to include some of Robin’s research.

The Searancke’s brewery became very successful and they had around a dozen pubs in the 1700s before selling up in 1815 to concentrate on their Kingsbury brewery in St Albans. But the story doesn’t quite end there. Two months after my inquiry into historic local hop growing, I was contacted by a Darrin Searancke, a descendent of the Hatfield brewers, who had read an article about the old Hatfield Brewery which our Brian Lawrence and I had contributed to for the WH Times.

Darrin wrote:

“As an avid brewer, I’m sure you can understand that I’m very keen to try an attempt at reproducing an ancient beer recipe from my Searancke forefathers! I am also very keen to begin hop cultivation of my own in New Zealand, as this has been a growing industry with the explosion of Micro Breweries and home brewers. ...”

To be continued - hopefully!



Kennelwood House

For many people new to Hatfield, the mock Tudor Kennelwood House looked a building out of place within the perfunctory Town Centre architecture surrounding it. Its earliest address was French Horn Lane, New Town, which indicates its current address - in Kennelwood Lane - was a name given to a new road spurring off from Queensway in the late 1950s, and which passed close to the house as part of the Town Centre development.

This new road name was surely also a nod to the nearby Dog Kennel Lane, once accessed by a wide footpath / track behind the shops from French Horn Lane to where Boots' chemist now stands. DKL was so named because Emily, 1st Marchioness of Salisbury, became Mistress of the Hatfield Hounds in 1793, and kept her dogs kenneled thereabouts.

Old maps show trees close to the house hence, presumably, Kennel wood.

A plot of land was acquired by Henry John Royds in 1896 and Kennelwood House was built to become a family home for he and his wife Agnes. It had 13 rooms.

The Royds were living in Bangor in 1891 but, perhaps, were aware of Hatfield from twenty years earlier as Henry's sister, Fanny Royds, (mercifully not named 'Emma') married local farmer and brewer John Lloyd of Astwick Manor in 1871.

The census of 1901 shows Henry, aged 56, residing at 'Kennel Wood Villa' with three female servants. His wife was presumably away at the time of the census.

At some point in the early 1900s the property became known as Kennelwood House.

Henry was a man of independent means, deriving his income from land and property. He also became a local JP.

He died at Kennelwood aged 65 in 1910, leaving a gross estate value of £14,516 – which is equivalent to £1.7 million today. His wife Agnes died there too in 1938 aged 92.

Their son, Henry George Trower Royds was noted as a farmer in 1911, but served in the army during and beyond WW1 from 1914 to 1921 in the Cheshire Yeomanry 2nd Battalion (Hussars) where he rose in rank to Captain. During WW2 he served as an ARP Warden.

Due to the Covid lockdown, we cannot access more data for residents at Kennelwood House following the death of Agnes, but we know that whilst local butcher Joseph C Walby was registered as living in Park Street in 1939, in 1949 he was residing at Kennelwood House.

Joseph died in 1974 aged 66; but he may have been living in Ellenbrook at the time.

Kennelwood House was once the housing headquarters of the New Towns Commission. In 1978 the NTC transferred it to Welwyn Hatfield Council, but then took it back after the council decided not to use it. In August 1982 the house was being used by the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Women's Royal Voluntary Service and on the brink of being sold to Civic Property Companies who were given permission to extend and convert part of the building into shops. In 1983 Kennelwood House was leased to Hatfield Town Council for 25 years.

It was bought by Herts Real Estate Ltd in 2015, who paid c£2.4 million for it.



Kennelwood House in 1957, standing amid building works of the new town centre

By Ken Wright



1960s.

Photographer unknown

ODE HATFIELD

In newsletter 118, HLHS member Hazel Bell provided poetry relating to Hatfield, and this prompted us to think that there must be many more out there which may only briefly have surfaced in some aged publication. If you know of any, please send them to us.

Member Rosemary Basden has provided Isabel Beckwith's poem:

HATFIELD

*Looking back on Hatfield, the town in which I grew,
I think of all the old things, compare them with the new.
We had no Galleria and no Tesco super-store,
But in the street where I grew up we never locked a door.
We didn't have the 'Social' but no child was left alone
And help was always close at hand, we didn't need the 'phone.
Jack Oldings made the tractors, De Havilland the 'planes,
And oh, of course, in Beaconsfield, they took care of the trains.
We had a proper station and the buses were all green,
And the daffodils in Hatfield Park, made a most fantastic scene.
The engines on the Test Bed they ran both day and night,
And oh how very proud we were at the Comet's first test flight.
It was really good to live here, though we were 'out in the sticks'.
We didn't have the Forum, but we could go to the flicks.
We had no dead Town Centre, it was just St. Albans Road,
Where they sold the things we needed, though it wasn't 'A la Mode'.
We children were not angels, but we daren't be very bad,
'Cos anyone who caught us would go and tell our Dad.
It can't be quite the same now, with so many on the dole,
But how I miss the good old days, when Hatfield had a soul.*

**This poem was written to commemorate
Hatfield's last day as an airfield on
Friday 8th April 1994.**

*There'll always be a Hatfield,
Alongside Comet Way,
A famous site; an airfield proud,
Made history in its day.*

*There'll always be a Hatfield,
Scene of a Tiger's lair,
Mosquitoes made from wood and glue,
The Racing Comet's heir.*

*There'll always be a Hatfield,
No better place to fly,
Ghosts and Goblins whistling through
Turned heads towards the sky.*

*There'll always be a Hatfield,
A silence must not fall,
An aerodrome for aeroplanes,
Please, SOMEONE, hear our call.*

Hazel also provided a verse written by a long-dead customer of pubs in Bellringer Street (a fictional representation of Fore Street), in Robert Richardson's novel of that name of 1988.

*Candlestick, Kingmaker,
Arms of the baker,
Sun in the morning
And parson's retreat.
Cricketer, virgin
And coach driver urging,
These are the taverns of Bellringer Street.*

Message from the Chairman

Friendship House: Following the closure of Friendship House, the committee is looking for an alternative venue for our meetings. Several locations have been identified and we will keep you informed of progress.

AGM: This is to announce that the 2020/21 AGM will be held this coming June. If a physical meeting is not possible, the committee will issue the AGM papers by email or post. These will include the accounts, reports and nomination forms. Members will have time to raise questions before voting forms have to be returned.

Hugh Richard Walduck OBE: It is with great sadness I must tell you of the death of Richard Walduck who died peacefully at home on January 6th 2021, aged 79. Richard was a past High Sheriff of Hertfordshire – and members who knew him will remember him as an enthusiastic and generous member of our society.

Beresford Johnson: Following recent coverage of this Hatfield artist in our newsletters, I was lucky enough to find one of the great man's paintings in a charity shop. It now hangs in the sitting room and cheers me up during these depressing times. Members will recognise the scene of Old Hatfield as it was when the main road ran through what is, today, the pedestrianised Salisbury Square.



Phil Marris (Chairman)

Heather Stands Down

Long standing HLHS member Heather Richardson has retired from our Committee after many years of service. Heather joined the Committee in 2006 and from 2007–2019 was our hard-working Treasurer.

Heather will be missed on the Committee as she was always willing to attend and help with Society activities as well as attending meetings and greeting everyone with a friendly smile.

Having moved to a bungalow in Ashley Court we wish Heather all the best in her new home.



Heather at a Breaks Coffee Morning,
Riding Stables (April 2013)

Erratum

The December newsletter (page 7) gave the date of the WW2 St Audrey's bombing as 10th October 1940. The year should of course have read 1944.

Hatfield Railway Accidents

Following recent articles on the subject, members may like to visit the “Railway Archive” website at <https://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/>. There, you can spend many hours browsing accident reports from as long ago as 1850. The website gives the date of the first recorded railway accident at Hatfield as 21st September 1850, when a head-on collision occurred between “a cattle train, consisting of three engines and 40 wagons” and a “down train”. The accident report stated, “About 20 minutes after the arrival of the cattle-train, the Parliamentary train came in, and was shortly followed by the first and second-class train. Five minutes after these trains were despatched the time then being (20:30) the station-master was directing the cattle-train to proceed, when the (20:00) down-train was heard rapidly approaching; and before the cattle-train had moved, the collision took place.” The above website contains gory accounts of many Hatfield railway accidents over the years, the most recent of course being that which occurred in recent memory on 17th October 2000. On the day in question, your chairman was returning, via Eurotunnel, from a business trip in Paris. As we headed up to Waterloo, the news filtered through the carriage and it soon became obvious that one was in for a very long journey home – and so it proved.

The First Hatfield Development Corporation House

On a different note, Chris Martindale writes that, some seventy years ago, in April 1951, the first house to be completed by the Hatfield Development Corporation was officially opened as a show house by Mr George Lindgren, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Local Government. This was the start of the expansion of Hatfield as one of the post-war New Towns.

No. 197 St Albans Road West was the first of a block of seven at Roe Green. The building cost, per house, was originally £1,278 with a rental of around £1 2s per week. Furniture for the show house was mostly in the Utility range and supplied by Tingey’s and three other stores in the area.

By 1952, the complete housing scheme in Roe Green of 124 houses and 81 flats was finished and officially opened by Sir Harold Macmillan the then Housing Minister.

For further information, see the “New Town Housing” section of the “Our Hatfield” website (<https://www.ourhatfield.org.uk/>).



Show house living room



Show house kitchen